



Aalborg Universitet

AALBORG UNIVERSITY
DENMARK

Suburban development – a search for public domains in Danish suburban neighbourhoods

Melgaard, Bente; Bech-Danielsen, Claus

Publication date:
2016

[Link to publication from Aalborg University](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Melgaard, B., & Bech-Danielsen, C. (2016). *Suburban development – a search for public domains in Danish suburban neighbourhoods*. Paper presented at SUSTAINABLE HOUSING – International Conference on Sustainable Housing Planning, Management and Usability, Porto, Portugal.

General rights

Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the public portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

- Users may download and print one copy of any publication from the public portal for the purpose of private study or research.
- You may not further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain
- You may freely distribute the URL identifying the publication in the public portal -

Take down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us at vbn@aub.aau.dk providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

Suburban development – a search for public domains in Danish suburban neighbourhoods

Bente Melgaard & Claus Bech-Danielsen

Danish Building Research Institute, Aalborg University, Copenhagen, Denmark

ABSTRACT: These years some of the post-war Danish suburbs are facing great challenges – social segregation, demographic changes and challenges in building technology. In particular, segregation prevents social life from unfolding across social, economic and cultural borders. Therefore, in this paper, potentials for bridge-building across the enclaves of the suburb are looked for through a combined architectural-anthropological mapping of public spaces in a specific suburb in Denmark, the analyses being carried out in the light of Hajer & Reijndorp's definition of public domains and the term exchange. The results so far show that suburban spaces with a potential for creating bridge-building across the segregated enclaves do exist but that, among other things, focus on spatial design is needed before actual public domains creating the basis for exchange are achieved.

1 INTRODUCTION

During the latest decades major Danish cities and suburbs have become still more segregated, preventing social life to unfold across social, economic and cultural barriers. Wanting to join with people like oneself is natural, but it is problematic when the residents do not meet across those communities and when groups from the top and bottom of society keep to themselves respectively. That adversely affects social cohesion, and it creates insecurity in the neighbourhoods, thereby getting socially disproportioned (Bech-Danielsen et al. 2014). In the suburbs this tendency is particularly evident, partly due to the functional separation into zones and the pronounced divisions between the various types of housing areas, i.e. single-family housing areas and social housing areas. Therefore, Danish architects and city planners want to do away with the split-up city as life in the suburb is in danger of taking place in a parallel society with people living side by side without interacting (Bech-Danielsen, 2013 a). In this context the present paper is looking for potentials for “bridge-building” across the suburban enclaves. It is carried out through a combined architectural-anthropological mapping of public spaces in a specific Danish suburb.

2 DANISH SUBURBS – A STORY OF CREATING A DISTANCE

In a Danish context it is claimed that the realization of the suburbs started in 1853 when the Danish Doctors' Association erected a very fine quarter of townhouses in the fields outside the

Copenhagen ramparts. The idea then of building houses in the bare fields was to move the residents *at a distance* from the city, out into fresh air and green surroundings. As it was, Copenhagen was cursed with a serious cholera epidemic, in 1853 alone leading to the death of 5000 people (Lützen, 1998).

The cities of that time were hopelessly unhygienic, and with the cholera epidemic it became clear that life in the city was detrimental to the health (Zerlang, 2001). That led to a new view of the city. Earlier the city was considered a secure place where the population pursued security and protection against external dangers. Now, when it turned out that the danger of infection was greatest within the city walls the picture changed radically¹. Hope of recovery was associated with the fresh air of the country outside the city, and the expansion of the city periphery was started (ibid.).

The adjusted view of the city went hand in hand with an adjusted view of nature. In the middle of the 19th century the poets and painters of the romanticism went out to the Danish countryside for their motifs (Tress, 2002), and after their exhibitions of the qualities of the country they were followed by the well-to-do families enjoying the joys of country life. Here they worshipped the sun and life outdoors, and here, at a distance of the environmental problems of the city, they were able to pursue the ideal of “a healthy mind in a healthy body”. The city was the dark dystopia, and in the following decades the suburbs with light, air and landscape qualities were developed as the utopian contrast to the city (Bech-Danielsen, 2015).

The architects and planners of modernism were mainly responsible for that trend. They focused on the horizon, not only space-wise but also time-wise. Space-wise by focusing on the periphery of the city where new housing was to be developed in green areas with an open sky, and time-wise by focusing on the future where a utopian dream of “the good life” was to unfold.

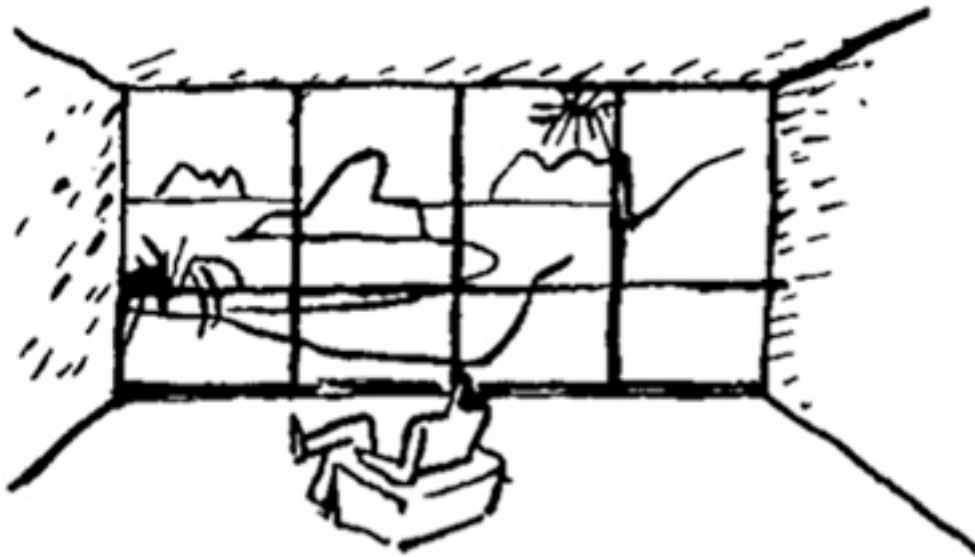


Figure 1. Le Corbusier's famous sketch illustrates that his eyes were fixed on the horizon – both space-wise and time-wise. Space-wise his eyes were fixed on the periphery of the city where the good life was to unfold, and time-wise his eyes were fixed on a future where the utopian dream was to be realized.

In the beginning the realization of the utopian ideas about the suburbs in the post-war era was a success. A great part of the Danish population settled in the suburbs, and for the families coming from the dark slum of one of the bridge quarters of the city it was felt as a fantastic improvement and a social climb (Dragsbo, 2008). The standard of living was high, the interior design modern, and daylight conditions were considerable better than in the slums in the city from where many residents came. The good life was associated with the country-like suburbs – this was the dream while the city was a dystopia to be fled for those who could afford it.

At the same time moving out to the suburbs cleared the way for an extensive refurbishment in the centers of the cities. The clearances caused the abolishment of 7,000-9,000 apartments annually up through the 1970's (Lind and Møller, 1994, p. 212). Therefore, the need for more building in the suburbs accelerated, and from that point of view the development of the suburbs was essential for an improvement of the living conditions in mid-city. However, the utopian dreams received serious blows. For instance, during the seventies a number of the new housing estates in the suburbs ran into trouble. The problems were both economic and social, and at the same time the post-modern criticism began to hit the buildings. Venturi changes Mies van der Rohe's well-known modernistic slogan "less is more" to "less is a bore" (Venturi, 1966), and while the American criticism was largely aimed at the endless single-family housing areas primarily the parallel rows of housing blocks were deemed boring and monotonous in the Danish debate. And when, furthermore, the housing blocks suffered extensive damages of the buildings in the beginning of the 1980's that was the last straw. Many resourceful residents started to move out of these areas, leaving a concentration of residents on the lowest step in the social hierarchy behind.

When, for various reasons, a high concentration of residents living on government subsidies and with a non-Danish ethnic background emerged, the growing criticism of the style of architecture of the housing blocks led to a new opinion of the buildings of the suburbs. From being synonymous with the good everyday life the housing blocks of the suburbs became more and more stigmatized. That was reflected when in 1982, among other things, a slum clearance law was replaced by a law about redevelopment of the cities. Instead of clearing the quarters in the historic city quarters they were to be developed in cooperation with the residents as the blocks in the city were growingly considered of historical value to be preserved. So while the buildings of the suburbs were stigmatized the view of the quarters of the city slowly changed for the better. The housing blocks of the suburbs took over the role of dystopia, and the utopian notions of life in the suburbs were given up.

2.1 "*Distance*" as a means

Looking back, what happened is that that the moving-out to the suburbs made it possible to solve the problems in the inner city. As mentioned, firstly it facilitated the refurbishment of a great number of poor dwellings by moving the residents out to the housing blocks in the suburb, secondly the environmental and health-related problems of the industrialized cities were solved by moving the city out to the suburb (Tietjen, 2010). The sources of pollution were moved out to industrial zones *at a distance* of the city and *at a distance* of residential areas, and the over-populated cities were "thinned out" by moving residents out to the suburbs – *at a distance* of the city.

Planners' and architects' way of overcoming the city related problems of industrialism therefore correspond with the kind of effort characterizing the environmental work in the 20th century. The German researcher of the environment, Ekhart Hahn, calls this kind of work for the environment "*The Principle of the Long Chimney*" (Hahn, 1991), pointing out that we have responded to the problems of the environment by putting them *at a distance*. Pollution was exported to the surroundings: by way of renovation systems we have moved refuse out to dumps, by way of sewers we have transported sewage out into the sea, and by way of tall chimneys we have led smoke and particles away from the city areas. On city level this was demonstrated physically in the suburbs and their division into zones. By way of the suburbs we moved housing as well as businesses away from the city, and by way of the functional separation of the suburbs we moved the polluted businesses away from the housing.

By creating a distance between the functions of the city we solved the environmental problems of the cities, and by way of mass production of dwellings in the suburbs we solved multiple housing and health related tasks². Each place had its own purpose as was the idea of the separation of the suburb into zones. But at the same time, behind our backs, a social division of the suburbs emerged along with the functional and spatial division. Together with the problems emerging in a number of social housing areas the suburbs got more and more segregated. The most resourceful residents chose to settle in single-family housing areas while those who were unable to choose for themselves and could not afford to own a home were left behind in the social housing schemes. The various socio-economic groups were divided – they settled in clearly defined areas spatially divided carrying various architectural imprints. People settled in enclaves, and in the latest years the enclaves marked by social problems have been designated "ghettoes".

As mentioned earlier, in these years an intention of building bridges between these enclaves is expressed among Danish architects and planners. Traditionally in those professional groups we have a great knowledge of cities and urban life, for one thing because of the studies of urban life of Jan Gehl, architect and researcher of urban spaces over a period of many years (Gehl & Svarre, 2013; Gehl, J. & Gemzøe, L., 2001; Gehl 2010). However, the suburbs and life in the suburban public spaces is a relatively unexplored field. Therefore, specific suburban spaces are analyzed to create an insight into the interaction, the routes and routines of the residents. What is everyday life like, and how is it formed by the physical settings?

The purpose of the empirical studies is to find out if the suburban public spaces create a framework for meetings across the enclaves, also called *exchange* (Hajer & Reijndorp, 2001). It is examined if these meetings or exchanges are building bridges between the suburban enclaves, and how they take place – what links together life in the suburb?

2.2 Urban life and landscape

As described above suburbs emerged as part of an escape from the city, and originally the landscape was the basic quality of the suburbs. Therefore, it is interesting to note that in recent years in the competitions concerning development of Danish suburbs³ intentions have been expressed of developing the urban qualities in the suburbs. Thus, in several competition programs "the lack of urban qualities" and "the lack of urban life" have been emphasized as a problem, while the diversity and social life of the city is considered an ideal to be reflected in the suburb. Several competition programs call for "urban life", "urban environment", "urban

qualities” and “urban identity” – “active urban life all day and all night year round” should be developed, and the landscape is described as increasing a feeling of insecurity in the suburb whereas a more urban-like atmosphere is viewed as a means to increase a feeling of security. At the same time attention is called to the fact that the development of the city begins to show the reverse tendency. Thus, urban development in Copenhagen of the recent years has been called “the vertical suburb”, referring to the fact that the qualities of the suburb are brought into the housing blocks of the city centers. Roof gardens are laid out, barbecues are taking place on the balconies, and along waterfronts open air swimming areas and other recreational facilities pop up.

It is a paradox: While striving to urbanize the suburbs the urban planners are introducing the qualities of the suburbs to the cities. And while correcting the formlessness of the periphery by urbanizing it in their attempt to regenerate the city centers they have adopted the organizational principles of the periphery: homogenization, privatization and division into thematic areas (Hajer & Reijndorp, 2001, p. 24).

3 PUBLIC DOMAINS AS THE BRIDGE-BUILDER OF THE SUBURB?

In the attempt of the presented PhD project to expose the character of the public spaces and their ability to create a frame for meeting across the suburban enclaves Hajer & Reijndorp’s definition of *public domains* and the term *exchange* are used (Hajer & Reijndorp, 2001, p. 24). These terms are introduced with relation to public suburban spaces and used in the analyses to study if, and if so, how the public spaces create a frame for cultural exchange between the residents of the different enclaves.

Hajer & Reijndorp makes it clear that the difference between public spaces and public domains is crucial for their analytical point of view:

“Public space is in essence a space that is freely accessible for everyone: public is the opposite of private. That is not to say that every public space is a public domain. Public domain entails additional requirements. We are interested in the question of which spaces are positively valued as spaces of shared experience by people from different backgrounds or with dissimilar interests” (Hajer & Reijndorp, 2001, p. 11).

So, according to Hajer & Reijndorp the definition of a public space is free access for all, it is the opposite of private. They explain that a public domain entails additional requirements and only by meeting those requirements a public space can develop into a public domain:

1. The space must have a positive place in the collective awareness, i.e. different groups must have knowledge of what is mentioned in the above quotation.
2. At the same time it is important that a variety of different social groups are present and that out of those there is a strong group with a special attachment to the place so that the unwritten rules of the place get to be negotiated among those groups. It is a question of getting to an agreement about subordinating to the unwritten rules or challenging them without conflicts.

We can now say that what dissociates a public domain from a public space is the importance of attachment to a strong group:

“Successful public domain ... requires a relatively strong group without the position of that group leading to exclusion and repression” (Hajer & Reijndorp, 2001, p. 89).

And the reason that it is perceived as a public domain is exactly that you do not yourself belong to the group that dominates the space (Hajer & Reijndorp, 2001, p. 116). But, as mentioned, at the same time it is essential that different groups do feel attached to the place – giving way to a form of friction or quiet confrontation:

“Different groups become attached to a particular place and somehow or other they must reach a compromise” (Hajer & Reijndorp, 2001, p. 41).

So, at Hajer & Reijndorp we meet a requirement for diversity (the presence of different social groups) and the attachment of a special group to the place for it to develop into a public domain where exchange is possible and, in fact, also takes place (Hajer & Reijndorp, 2001, p. 11). The term *exchange* is very central for Hajer & Reijndorp, and we shall look further into that below.

“We define public domains as those places where an exchange between different social groups is possible and also actually occurs” (Hajer & Reijndorp, 2001, p. 11).

Hajer & Reijndorp deliberately use the term *exchange* instead of “meeting”, as the term meeting is vague (Hajer & Reijndorp, 2001, p. 12). They refer to the views of Immanuel Kant to explain exchange, Kant writing:

“Making judgments is always based on an exchange with others. It is in this confrontation with other opinions that we develop our own ideas” (Hajer & Reijndorp, 2001, p. 12).

That leads us to the conclusion that the purpose of places for exchange is the confrontation with others who are not like us, in order to eliminate the narrow-mindedness of people and get an insight into the reality of other people:

“The core of successful public spaces thus lies not so much in the shared use of space with others, let alone in the “meeting”, but rather in the opportunities that urban proximity offers for a “shift” of perspective: through the experience of otherness one’s own casual view of reality gets some competition from other views and lifestyles” (Hajer & Reijndorp, 2001, p. 89).

So, according to Hajer & Reijndorp, exchange requires that you expose yourself to the reality of other people, other social groups than your own, people with other backgrounds or interests, thereby gaining new experiences, acquiring a possibility of seeing new angles, developing personal ideas and social intelligence; and, basically, exchange helps to counteract stigmatization. And that is exactly where the term gets so be interesting with relation to bridge-building between the segregated suburban enclaves.

In a recent article Reijndorp discusses the public domain of the suburb (Reijndorp, 2015), speaking about the different groups, social worlds and parochial spaces of the suburb, what we call enclaves, and he state that:

“At the crossroads of these parochial domains, or where such domains overlap, a public domain is created, a place of cultural exchange” (Reijndorp, 2015, p. 149).

According to Reijndorp public domains get the chance to emerge where different enclaves meet at a crossroad or overlap each other, but later he also emphasizes that the siting of the enclaves in the urban fabric is important. He stresses that the greatest potential for the public domains to crop up is where the proximity of those enclaves is high, measured either by distance or by time (Reijndorp, 2015, p. 149). This has been kept in mind when the suburban spaces are observed in the mapping of the PhD-project, as it is particularly interesting in a suburban context due to the divided physical structure. For instance main roads, big parking lots, fences, noise preventing banks and belts of plantation are examples of barriers creating a physical distance between the enclaves, all of them places with mainly one purpose or one function.

A public domain is described as a *“space of cultural exchange”*⁴ and in relation to the functional division of the suburb where the different enclaves may differ in content but isolated from each other and inwards orientated (Sieverts, 2005), it is relevant to map out a series of public suburban spaces to study if these promote cultural exchange between the enclaves. Keeping the previously mentioned challenges around segregation in mind one of our theses is that some (not all) of the public spaces of the suburb must promote cultural exchange and bridge-building.

4 THE ANTHROPOLOGICAL FIELDWORK

The methodological apparatus applied in the PhD-project has an interdisciplinary architectural-anthropological approach. Its purpose is, firstly, to map out spaces and movements in a specific suburb by way of architectural and urban life analyses, and, secondly, to study social relations by way of anthropological fieldwork in order to gain a greater understanding of the spaces to be mapped out and the people living in the suburb. This interplay between methods makes it possible to examine the research question of the PhD-project: how do the public spaces influence the social relations in the suburb, and the approach opens up a new way of discovering unexplored potentials among the residents of the suburb and in the subject of the suburb.

4.1 Method

From the world of anthropology qualitative interviews, situational interviews and fieldwork of a long period of time have been applied, including, among other things, participant observation, informal interviews, and a diary method based on visual ethnographies. This was carried out by the PhD-student who, for nine months together with her family, moved into an apartment in the selected suburb, Søndermarken in Vejle. From here the family observed and took part in life as it evolved in Søndermarken.

“...The anthropologist places himself as one among the others in the community to be studied. The anthropologist must enter the world to be studied, and it has to be done by settling in it...” (Hastrup, 2003, p. 10).

The participant observation of a long period was carried out by participating in activities in the new community center of the area, broad meetings, local council work, and social arrangements. Besides, the family did daily rounds in the suburb when the children were taken to or picked up at the local day care center, when shopping, when it was time for playing in the playground or a walk in nature, when bicycling to work in the city (4 kilometers from the area), and other everyday activities in the public spaces. The participant observation was thereby given a chance to register nuances of everyday life in the suburb at close quarters.



Figure 2. Situations from the everyday life in Søndermarken.

4.2 Preliminary findings

Often, among architects and planners, there is a critical approach to the suburb (Nielsen, 2013). It is assumed that the suburbs are boring sleeping towns; lifeless places where nothing happens and where there is no community feeling. (Dirckinck-Holmfeld et. al., 2013). The fieldwork in Søndermarken clearly disproves this, as here we found a quiet, but alive and buzzing suburb.

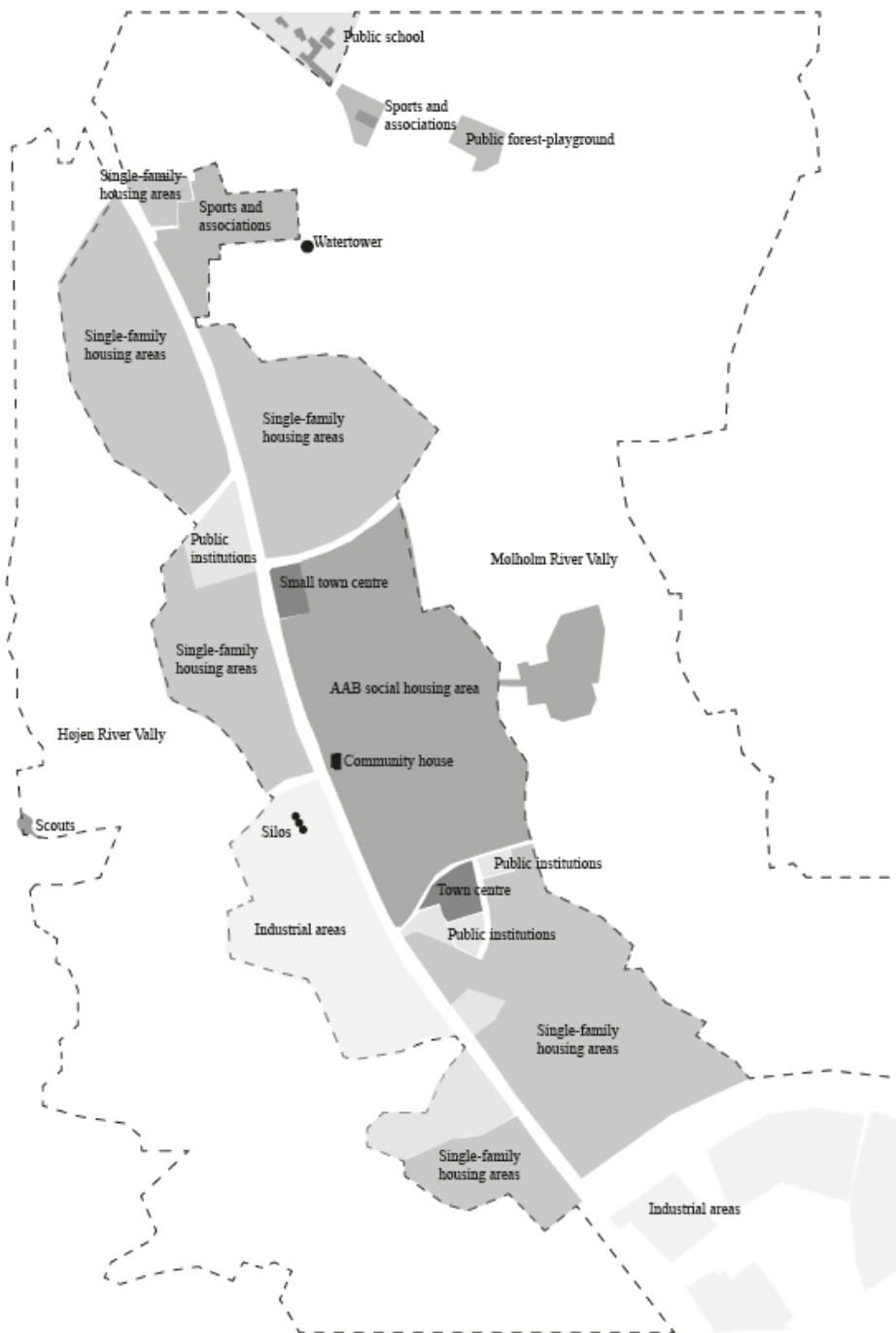


Figure 3. The buzzing suburb; at a distance the suburb does not really express the buzzing life which is uncovered through the fieldwork. The scale and the pace are too high.



Figure 4. Zooming in at suburban public spaces; here a playground at the boundary of a single-family housing area and the Højen river valley. When the pace is slowing down, activity shows. Not many people, but still, activity and meetings in public spaces.

Both qualitative and informal interviews as well as the participant observation confirm that the residents of the suburbs do meet, that they are very active in their local area and that they do make use of the public suburban spaces. The suburb is far from lifeless. The question, then, is if the residents meet across the different housing enclaves and if an exchange is going on among them.

Counts from the suburban spaces demonstrate that there is a quiet flow of people, and observations from for instance joint dinners in the community center, midsummer festival, soccer practice and other things tell that the residents are committed and take part in the various types of activities. Likewise, repeatedly stories pop up from the qualitative interviews in which the residents talk about the cohesion in their street, the community feeling in the immediate neighbourhood, but typically from residents who have lived in the quarter for a long time. The opposite takes place when a new resident is to find his fixed place:

“We have just moved to Løget and still have no network here. I miss community with people my own age – something to meet over, where you can establish new relations” Alex, 32.

Here we see a demand for joint interests within the same age group – so what determines the desire is neither the geography nor the address in a particular enclave, but that there is a will to meet with new people across, provided you have something to meet over.

That indicates that the theoretical point of view from Hajer & Reijndorp is present in practice: The desire for new experiences, for looking up other people and the need for meeting places across the suburban enclaves, is what we find again out there.

One of the observations made during the fieldwork was that the residents were relatively focused on the area around their home and their neighbourhood – for instance the road in front of their house, the house owners' association, or the staircase in the housing blocks. Small close communities, easy to grasp, were mentioned, and several families with children mentioned that they were ready to use more local offers (e.g. activities in the community center of their area, joint dinners, parties, etc.), time permitting:

“Children are a common interest here. We would like to join the dinners in the community center, when the children get a little bit older. Our spare time is limited – our weekdays are chaotic” Jan, 37.

That indicates that more local options would facilitate everyday life of the residents (here the target group was families with children), so pressure could be eased, offering time for engaging in activities beyond their limited everyday radius. This can be seen as an indication towards the importance of the local aspect where distance and time counts heavily with regard to participation in the community. The residents used the word *community* when talking about meeting and interacting, and we, as researchers, inspired by Hajer & Reijndorp employ terms like friction, confrontation and exchange (Hajer & Reijndorp, 2001, p. 89).

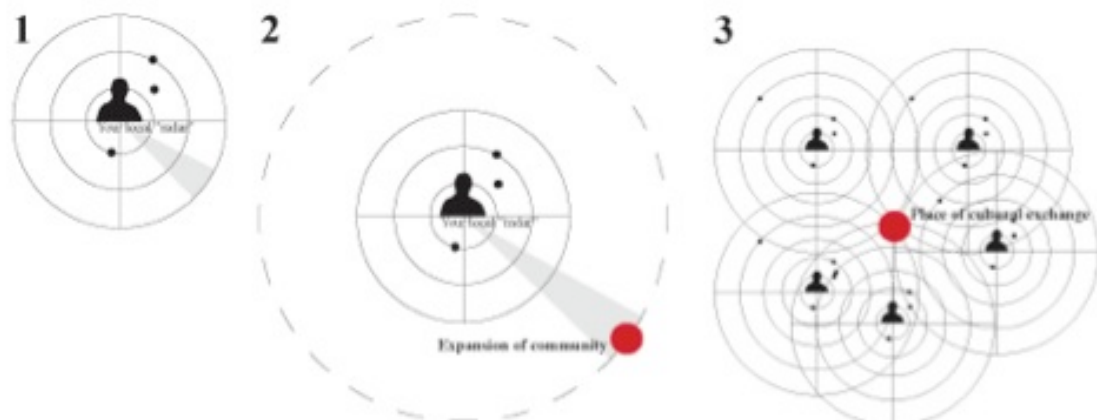


Figure 5. Expansion of the closed social worlds towards new communities and possible public domains.

In the above diagram a draw from the qualitative interviews is visualized in which many families indicate that they have a “local radar” (1) – in the sense that you have a radius from your home in which you move every day. There is a limit to the distance you want to walk to playgrounds, sports, shopping etc. and that very radius means that that you do not meet many other people in your neighbourhood than those you already know or have seen before. But how are you motivated to get on out in the next radius? How do we extend our radar (2) so you meet more different people with other life stories and cultural backgrounds as demanded by Hajer & Reijndorp in their quest for *public domains*, and referred to, among other things, in a recent Danish report from *Changing communities, The think tank The City 2025* as one of the most important challenges for the community in the future?

In the qualitative interviews the residents stress that if the network of footpaths is upgraded and becomes more connected and knowledge of “the other jewels” in the area is increased they would like to act in a greater radius.

But if you want people to do that in their everyday life you have to create occasions for that in the shape of everyday activities that you would have to carry out anyway, e.g. shopping, picking up children in an institution or at school and so on or through common interests like nature, sports, music, food, leisure activities and so forth. Last, but not least, extra special occasions would also be able to motivate people to act in a greater radius, e.g. concerts, exhibitions, events, sports games, voluntary work etc. (3).

“Exhibiting a Formula 1 racing car, a dead whale or throwing in a concert in the local centre area; that will attract people and get them out of their houses” Poul, 66.

Thereby the studies indicate that a *public domain* in the suburb must involve both an attraction you want to move to experience and everyday chores you have to overcome anyway, in this way creating a realistic local offer and thereby a “critical mass” or a variety of social groups as demanded by, among others, Hajer & Reijndorp.

Besides the close local communities the public spaces, where you have a particular errand to make, were mentioned in the qualitative interviews as places where people would meet across, e.g. the supermarket, the local center area, the community center and at the sports facilities:

“Many residents attends activities like “Løget by day” in the community center and the Halloween party when we take a walk the area with torches” Saleh, 17.

In addition to that particularly popular places in nature were mentioned: in this case the beautiful river valleys enclosing the suburb on two sides. These statements came from both residents of the different enclaves of single-family housing areas and from the residents in the social housing area.

Hereby the fieldwork clearly indicates that the residents of the suburb want to meet across the enclaves and that, to a certain extent, they do so. The fieldwork has provided a deep insight into the area and a personal knowledge of many residents in the whole suburb. That has permitted a chance to observe if the residents did meet across the different enclaves, but there is a need for supporting that observation further with regard to method. Therefore, (in the fall of 2016) this is explored through a series of situational interviews in the selected public spaces in the suburb. The situational interviews are meant to explore *the exchange* deeper – where do the residents who meet in the public spaces live (which social groups do they belong to), is a variety of groups present and do they have an attachment to the spaces in question?

In the beginning of section 2 we discussed the difference between city and suburb, and precisely by the abovementioned observations we clearly experience a difference between city and suburb. In the city we already have a density and a variety of people, and, therefore, the public spaces have a chance of developing into public domains far more than in the suburb. And as we shall see in the architectural analyses in the next section the placing and the design of the public spaces means more to *exchange* in the suburb than in the city exactly because of the structural challenges of the suburb and the fact that it is rather difficult to attract money for the development of the public spaces in the suburb⁵.

We shall take a closer look at the use and the physical character of the public spaces in Søndermarken in a series of architectural and urban life analyses below.

5 ANALYSES OF THE SUBURBAN PUBLIC SPACES

The suburban spaces of the project have been mapped out through architectural analyses and registrations of urban life for the purpose of exploring the design (the planned suburb) and everyday life (the lived life of the suburb).

The collected data present a picture of how the suburban spaces function, how the actual patterns of use are and, not the least, an indication of the difference between suburb and city.

5.1 *Method*

Firstly, by way of architectural analyses a description is made of the different types of suburban spaces that make up the physical frames and conditions of the space by way of registrations, photos and diagrams, plans and sections as well as the main characteristics. Then “urban life” is explored applying the tools for registrations of urban life devised by architect and researcher Jan Gehl (Gehl & Svarre, 2013). Registrations of urban life are systematic registrations of human activities in public spaces. Jan Gehl has carried out, developed and written about studies of urban life since 1969, and in this particular study 3 of his well-known methods are applied. Counts of pedestrians are made, mapping of stays, and patterns of movements are mapped out. 7 cases have been selected in the light of the fieldwork carried out in Søndermarken in 2015 and from qualitative interviews with 31 residents in the various housing areas in Søndermarken⁶. In the interviews the suburban spaces below were mentioned as important meeting places in the suburb, and what they have all in common is that they are described as places in Søndermarken where the residents actually meet across the enclaves: Public spaces where the residents are crossing borders and meet across the single-family housing areas and the social housing area. They are places where the different worlds of the residents meet, and spaces with positive public awareness whether they are used or not. For instance the beautiful river valleys are mentioned as important public spaces, while the mapping shows that these spaces are not used nearly as often as for instance the area around the supermarket (which certainly contains a very specific everyday activity, namely shopping).

The seven selected typologies of suburban spaces are the following:

1. The center area; Løget Center
2. The community house in the social housing association AAB; “Kvartershuset”
3. The supermarket of the quarter; Rema 1000
4. The sports ground; Søndre Stadion
5. Section of the river valley with dense woods and banks; the Højen River Valley
6. Section of the river valley with the wide-open sceneries and a network of footpaths; The Mølholm River Valley
7. Section of the main road; Grønlandsvej



Figure 6: Selected suburban public spaces in Søndemarken, Vejle

5.2 Preliminary findings from registrations of urban life

As mentioned counts of pedestrians, mapping of stays and mapping out of patterns of movements have been made in 7 cases. In general the pedestrian counts show that where the suburban spaces contain a specific function we meet the most people at the same time. As an example the supermarket Rema 1000 has an average of 289 visitors per hour, the community house, “Kvartershuset”, has 136, and the Løget Center has 129 whereas we encounter the least density in the spaces in nature: the Mølholm river valley with an average of 37 people and the Højen river valley where 5 people are passing through. Compared with the counts from the center of Vejle⁷ where a study of urban spaces and urban life was carried out in 2002 we find that that in the most crowded street (Nørregade, part of the pedestrian street in the city center) an average of 1665 people per hour have been counted. If we compare the city center with the suburb Søndemarken numbers a considerable but not surprising difference in the pedestrian traffic shows up. Søndemarken has about 3350 inhabitants whereas 55.000 people live in the city of Vejle in 2016 (Statistics Denmark). That indicates that the suburban public spaces with one or more specific functions have a quiet but fairly constant flow of people compared with the surrounding area.

By the mapping of stays a picture is drawn showing that very few people spend time in the studied suburban public spaces. Maybe the reason is that there is no framework for that. The design of the spaces does not invite to a classical stay like in the squares and market places in the city center. In the suburban public spaces this was probably never an objective in itself, but it opens up a discussion about what the suburban public spaces should contain.

The mapping out of patterns of movements in the selected suburban spaces add to this observation by data showing that the spaces are mainly used as transit spaces and that the placing of the spaces in the fabric of the suburb is of great importance to the use of it. Together the patterns of movements and the pedestrian counts show that the placing of the suburban spaces is central to the users. The two spaces with the highest number of visitors are the supermarket and the community house, both, actually, visible, central and accessible in the fabric of the suburb.

5.3 Preliminary findings from architectural analyses

The architectural analyses are based on the questions of Hajer & Reijndorp rhetorically asked of themselves in their discussion about what defines a public domain (Hajer & Reijndorp, 2001, p. 11). A duality is to be detected in Hajer & Reijndorp's definition: it deals with both the physical place and the social parameters. Therefore, in accordance with the architectural-anthropological approach the analysis are divided into:

Physical parameters:	Social parameters:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where is the public space placed in the fabric of the suburb? • Which activities/functions belong to the space? • What role does the spatial design play? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the space have a place in the public awareness; do the residents feel attached to it? • Are a variety of different social groups present? • Does one particular group feel ownership of the place so that negotiations about the unwritten rules arise?

These questions are used to study the ability of the suburban spaces for bridge-building and thereby the framework for *exchange*, and it appears that there is a great difference between the character and the use of the public spaces.

The architectural analyses generally show that the visibility of the public spaces and their placing in the fabric of the suburb are important to their possible development into public domains. This is particularly evident when the registrations of urban life are seen together with the architectural analyses, and where the community house and the supermarket actually fulfill all the parameters apart from focus on the spatial design, the spatial design consequently playing a decisive role. Anyway, as mentioned, the results are preliminary as we still lack the situational interviews for the confirmation of the attachment of special groups to the spaces.

Through the architectural analyses and the analyses of urban life we also found that the suburban spaces have another scale, another and less critical mass of users, another pace, and,

not the least, another flow of people than in the classical urban spaces as we know them from the city centers.

6 CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this paper has been to study the framework for exchange in the suburb, and in the light of the subsequent mapping we have discussed which ones of the public spaces have potentials as public domains and which ones may have the precise opposite potentials: the open landscape making the suburb and not a city – and contain the original suburban qualities: light, air and landscape that are still attractive and cherished values.

By way of Hajer & Reijndorp we have described the difference between a *public space* and a *public domain*: A public space is freely accessible for all, public is the opposite of private. But a public domain demands more than free access – it is a place where cultural exchange is possible and, in fact, also takes place. It demands a strong attachment of a group, exchange between different social groups, and a positive appreciation of it as a place of common experience by people from different social groups. And, not the least, that you have an experience of otherness enabling your own view of reality to be challenged by the views and lifestyles of other people.

In the study of seven selected public areas in a typical Danish suburb we have found mostly public spaces, but also two public places that by a few interventions may develop into public domains. The two suburban spaces are the areas around the community house and the supermarket. These are characterized by fulfilling most of Hajer & Reijndorp's parameters: a visible, accessible and central placing in the suburban fabric as well as a distinctive function combined with the social parameters; attachment and diversity. What we have found as still missing is a focus on the spatial design.

In the introduction it is argued that exchange is particularly central in relation to bridge-building between the suburban enclaves, but at the same time the field work gives an insight into which of the original qualities of the suburb are important for everyday life in a suburb of today. Both in the single-family housing areas and in the social housing areas several informants explain that closeness to the beautiful nature is one of their most important reasons for settling in this suburb.

The collected mapping lends to recommending a subtle balance between condensation of the prioritized public domains and spaces for air, light and landscape qualities, so that urban qualities do not overrule the basic values when suburban spaces are to be developed and transformed.

The development of the suburbs must take place as a concentration of spots where public domains can emerge so we can reduce the distance between the suburban enclaves. But the development must not take place on the terms of the city. It has to be based on the premises of the suburb, where, to a large extent, function, placing, and design must be taken into consideration when the suburban public domains are to be developed.

REFERENCES

- Bech-Danielsen, C. et. al. 2014. *Fællesskaber i forandring, Tænk tanken Byen 2025*. København: Ministeriet for By, Bolig og landdistrikter.
- Bech-Danielsen, C. 2013 a. Levende og inkluderende forstad. Kunsten af klinke en forstad. I: Dirckinck-Holmfeld, K., Ronaldsen, S. E. & Thomsen, A. B. (red.), 2013. *Fremtidens Forstæder*. København: Bogværket.
- Bech-Danielsen, C. 2013 b. Bæredygtige bosteder. Om forstadens identitet og kulturarv – og om spor efter liv. I: Dirckinck-Holmfeld, K., Ronaldsen, S. E. & Thomsen, A. B. (red.), 2013. *Fremtidens Forstæder*. København: Bogværket.
- Bech-Danielsen, C., 2015. The Secret Suburb: Second Lives in Second Homes. In: Steiner, H. & Veel, K. (eds.). *Invisibility Studies: Surveillance, Transparency and the Hidden in Contemporary Culture*. Oxford, Bern, Berlin, Bruxelles, Frankfurt am Main, New York, Wien: Peter Lang, Vol. 23, Kap. Part III Surfaces, Secrets and Interior Spaces, pp. 203-221.
- Dirckinck-Holmfeld, K., Ronaldsen, S. E. & Thomsen, A. B. (red.) 2013. *Fremtidens Forstæder*. København: Bogværket.
- Dragsbo, P., 2008. Hvem opfandt parcelhuskvarteret? Forstaden har en historie. Museum Sønderjylland. Dansk Center for Byhistorie.
- Gehl, J. & Svarre, B. 2013. *Bylivsstudier - studier af samspillet mellem byens form og byens liv*. København: Bogværket.
- Gehl, J. & Gemzøe, L. 2001. *Byens rum – byens liv*. København: Arkitektens Forlag og Kunstakademiets Forlag.
- Gehl, J., Gemzøe, L., Kirknæs, S., Sternhagen, B. 2006. *Det nye byliv*. København: Arkitektens Forlag.
- Gehl, J. 2010. *Byer for mennesker*. København: Bogværket.
- Hastrup, K., 2003. *Ind i verden. En grundbog i antropologisk metode*. København: Hans Reitzels forlag.
- Hajer, M. & Reijndorp, A. 2001. *In search of new public domain*. Rotterdam: NAI Publishers.
- Howard, Ebenezer 1944 (Third impression). *Garden Cities of To-Morrow*. London: Faber and Faber Ltd.
- Kvorning et. al. (red.), 2012. *Bæredygtige forstæder – Udredning og anbefalinger*. København: Realdania og Naturstyrelsen.
- Larsen, J. & Meged, J., 2012. At fotografere og filme byen – visuelle etnografier. I: Andersen, J., Pedersen, M. & Koedfoed, L., (red.), 2012. *Byen i Bevægelse: Mobilitet, Politik, Performativitet*. Frederiksberg: Roskilde Universitetsforlag.
- Lützen, Karin, 1998. *Byen tæmmes. Kernefamilie, sociale reformer og velgørenhed i 1800-tallets København*. København; Hans Reitzels Forlag.
- Nielsen, T., 2013. Re-imagining the Danish Suburb. In: *Suburbs – transformation and development: Papers from the NSBB-conference 17-19 September 2013 in Denmark p. 96-104*. Copenhagen: Danish Building Research Institute, Aalborg University.
- Nio, Reijndorp & Veldhuis 2009. *Atlas Westelijke Tuinsteden Amsterdam, De geplande en de geleefde stad*. Amsterdam: SUN – Trencity/ELF Stichting.
- Opsamling fra kvalitative interviews i Løget og parcelhuskvarterne i Søndermarken 2.04.14. (A summary of qualitative interviews in Løget and the residential areas in Søndermarken 2.04.14.)

Reijndorp, A., 2015. Supermarket and superdiversity: the public domain of the suburb. In M. Dehaene & I. Verhaert (Eds.), *LABO XX - Opting for the twentieth-century belt* (pp. 146-151). Antwerpen: Stad Antwerpen.

Sieverts, Thomas et. al. 2005. *Zwischenstadt – Inzwischen stadt? Entdecken, begreifen, verändern. Eine Collage auf der basis von texten aus dem Forschungsprojekt "Mitten am Rand – Zwischenstadt, Zur qualifizierung der verstädterten Landschaft"*. Wuppertal: Verlag Müller + Busmann KG. (Translation into Danish by Morten Daugaard, Aarhus School of Architecture, 2006).

Svarre, Birgitte Bundesen 2010. *Det urbane suburbane – forstadsrum i Vangede og Silicon Vally*. Ph.d.-afhandling. København: Kunstakademiets Arkitektskole.

Tress, G., 2002. Development of Second-Home Tourism in Denmark. London, *Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism*, Routledge, april 2002, pp. 109-122.

Venturi, Robert, 1966. *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture*. New York: The Museum of Modern Art Press.

Zerlang, Martin, 2001. Forstad og funktionalisme. In: Hansen, Jens Schjerup and Bech-Danielsen, Claus (Eds.). *Modernismens genkomst*. København; Arkitektens Forlag, pp.124-125.

ENDNOTES

¹ Also the city wall no longer offered protection against military attacks as the improvement of weapons had reduced importance of the walls and ramparts.

² However, during the 20th century evidently the environmental problems were not solved by building chimneys however tall nor by moving production further out into the periphery. Even the remotest rain forest, the deepest sea and the most far away atmosphere was influenced. Pollution was not to be stowed away any longer; it was all inclusive, forcing us to relate to it in different ways. That was expressed in 1984 when the Brundtland Commission was appointed, and it was realized that the environmental problems had changed. Action had to be taken internationally as the environmental problems had reached international level. Likewise it was evident that we cannot solve the problems of the cities any longer by moving its functions further out in the periphery.

³ www.forstaden.dk

⁴ Notes from Arnold Reijndorp's keynote on the Housing and Welfare Conference in Copenhagen 7.5.2015.

⁵ In the wake of the architect competition "The Suburb of the Future" The city of Vejle applied for a grant for an upgrading and rethinking of the center area of Søndermarken through a national Kickstart project, which was denied, unfortunately.

⁶ A summary of qualitative interviews in Løget and the Residential areas in Søndermarken 2.04.14.

⁷ "Urban Space & Urban Life, Vejle 2002" Report by GEHL Architects prepared for the Municipality of Vejle.